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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

The electronic media and Maariv reported that at around 1:45 a.m. last night (6:45 p.m. EDT) a rocket landed next to tents in the IDF boot camp of Zikim, south of Ashkelon. Sixty-nine soldiers were wounded, one of them critically and most of them lightly. Islamic

Jihad and the Popular Resistance Committees claimed responsibility for the attack. Israel Radio quoted a senior GOI source as saying that Israel should respond immediately and powerfully. Other GOI sources were quoted as saying that Israel should carefully prepare its response.

Major media (lead stories in Yediot and Ha'aretz) quoted Arab sources as saying that last week Israel attacked targets in Syria. The media quoted Syrian FM Walid Mualeem as saying on Monday during an official visit to Turkey that the Israeli warplanes that violated Syria's airspace last week dropped live ammunition on Syrian soil. Mualeem added that Israel's decision not to comment was "appropriate." Mualeem was quoted as saying: "Israel used live ammunition in a deliberate and hostile attack." His Turkish counterpart, Ali Babacan, demanded a quick explanation from Israel over fuel tanks found near the Syrian border in the incident last Thursday, which he said involved violation of Turkish airspace by Israeli jets. Yediot quoted the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar as saying that the IAF apparently bombed predetermined strategic defense targets. Israel is still not commenting on the incident. Leading media quoted former MK Azmi Bishara as saying on a Syrian Web site that Israel may have intended to prevent weapons from reaching Hizbullah or to take out Syrian anti-aircraft of radar installations in order to prepare air corridors for flights to Iran. Last night Channel 2-TV reported that Hizbullah leaders made similar remarks. Ha'aretz reported that Israel has thus far not detected any Syrian preparations for war. Nonetheless, IDF units on the Golan Heights are on high alert, and will remain that way throughout the holiday period.

Maariv reported that a date has been proposed for the international meeting in Washington: November 14-15. Maariv and The Jerusalem

Post reported that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas is expected to leave for Saudi Arabia and will try to convince Saudi Arabia to take part in the meeting. The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday, fearing the outbreak of a new round of Palestinian violence, senior Israeli defense officials warned against building up expectations for the meeting. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted the London-based Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat as saying that the Bush administration has promised Abbas important achievements at the meeting.

Ha'aretz reported that following their meeting in Jerusalem on Monday, PM Ehud Olmert and Chairman Abbas announced that Israel and the PA will establish working groups to begin drafting an agreement of principles. The goal is to have the document ready to present at a US-sponsored international meeting that will take place in Washington later this fall. Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Olmert's Bureau issued a statement saying that the working groups will focus on furthering the "two-state vision." Chief PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat and Abbas's chief of staff, Rafiq al-Husseini, will head the Palestinian teams. Israel's teams will be headed by senior Olmert aides Yoram Turbowicz and Shalom Turgeman, with assistance from representatives of the Foreign and Defense Ministries. Erekat and Hussein told reporters on Monday that Abbas and Olmert agreed to hold another meeting on September 25. In addition, Israel will release additional Palestinian prisoners during the first week of Ramadan, which begins on Thursday, as a good-will gesture. Olmert also agreed to Abbas's request that Israel transfer PA packages of food and cigarettes to Palestinian prisoners during the holiday. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe cited the optimism of Israeli and Palestinian negotiators. Ha'aretz reported that on Monday PM Ehud Olmert's Bureau requested a copy of a 1995 paper formulated during secret meetings between Yossi Beilin and Mahmoud Abbas. The document addressed a possible framework for the permanent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The daily said that officials asked Beilin for a copy, possibly because Olmert and his aides want to learn about the issues on which Abbas expressed agreement in the past and make use of that knowledge in the current effort. Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who succeeded the assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, rejected Beilin's proposal to use the document as a springboard to a conclusion on the settlement issue. The document was not signed and Abbas denied its existence until several years later when he told a senior US official of his support for the paper.

Yediot reported that in Paris over the last weekend 20 Israeli and Palestinian economists, headed by Vice PM Haim Ramon and PA Economy Minister Kamel Hasuna, drafted an economic declaration of principles within the framework of a final status agreement.

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that Egypt is still involved with efforts to free three Israeli soldiers held by Hamas and Hizbullah. The information came to light after a meeting on Monday between Jerusalem's chief negotiator, Ofer Dekel, Omar Suleiman, in Cairo. Ha'aretz reported that Dekel is refusing to comment on the meeting, but quoted sources involved with the talks as saying that the meeting was meant to prepare for the renewal of negotiations with Hamas and Hizbullah through Egypt. Yediot quoted sources involved in the negotiations as saying that there is agreement between Israel and Hamas that Israel would release 450 prisoners in exchange for Shalit, but that Israel has clarified that in no way will it release detainees with "blood on their hands." Maariv reported that on Monday PM Olmert promised Chairman Abbas that he will recommend a release of Palestinian prisoners. Ha'aretz quoted Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter as saying on Monday that the Hamas Executive Force officer captured by Israel on Friday is a bargaining chip in the effort to free Gilad Shalit.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday the head of Israel's National Security Council, Ilan Mizrachi, announced that he will be leaving on November 1, after holding the position for some 18 months. His deputy, Itamar Ya'ar, and the head of the country's counterterrorism unit, Danny Arditti, will also be leaving their posts.

Speaking on Israel Radio last night, State Prosecutor Eran Shendar recommended opening criminal investigations against PM Olmert in two additional cases. The PM is already under criminal investigation over the privatization of Bank Leumi, Israel's second-largest bank, and is to be questioned under caution in that case in the near future. Both of the two new cases involve Olmert's conduct in his previous role as industry, trade and employment minister. One involves suspicions that Olmert gave special consideration to a company represented by his friend and former law partner, Uri Messer, in grant allocations by the ministry's Investment Center. The other involves suspicions that he made political appointments at the Small Business Authority. Both cases began with an investigation and subsequent scathing report by State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday the national water company Mekorot announced that "another dry winter will bring Israeli water supplies to the red lines."

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of the Multi-National Force - Iraq, and US Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker assured the US Congress that the situation in that country was improving. Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that Petraeus talked about a partial pullout of US forces from Iraq by the middle of 2008.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Hy Brown, the chief engineer of New York's World Trade Center, who is now a resident of Jerusalem, will build solar houses in the Negev,

Leading media reported that OC Central Command Maj. Gen. Gadi Shammi decided on Sunday that seven IDF soldiers who disobeyed orders and refused to take part in evacuating settlers from Hebron's wholesale market last month will be suspended from combat units.

Ha'aretz reported that on Monday a Palestinian youth who was shot in the head during an IDF operation on Friday died of his wounds in Rambam Medical Center in Haifa.

Yediot reported that the "olive tree war" between Palestinians and settlers is continuing.

Maariv reported that Egypt has raised the entrance fee it levies from Israeli travelers crossing the border into the Sinai, from 46 Egyptian Pounds (EGP) -- around USD 10 -- to EGP 500 -- around USD [1100](#).

Ha'aretz and Yediot reported that on Monday the Counter-Terrorism

Bureau in the PM's Office issued a travel advisory to Israelis planning trips to Colombia, following reports in the Colombian media of Israeli involvement in military training in Colombia. The warning said the "threat has increased against Israelis connected with the Colombian government, particularly assassination and abduction."

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Maybe what happened -- or didn't happen

-- in Syria or elsewhere on one of the nights last week, will prove itself to have been an act that did not hasten the advent of war but, rather, somehow increased the chances of peace."

Current affairs correspondent Yoav Stern wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The three-way diplomatic liaison that binds Ankara, Damascus, and Jerusalem is a very sensitive matter indeed."

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Turkey does not want to be blamed for letting Israeli planes use its airspace [to attack Iran]. And therefore, it may now just be building deniability."

Columnist Aviad Kleinberg wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "In almost every domain Israel has no national goals.... Think about the way in which, without any plan or diplomatic sense, Israel carried out a crawling annexation of the territories."

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Once again, it seems that [the US] is approaching a crossroads of decision: After all, the frustration of an American president in the face of arrogance is nothing compared to that of a president being faced by a regime [Syria's] that embodies a concrete danger."

Block Quotes:

I. "Israeli Silence is Golden"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (9/11): "The pace of the drip is slow but regular. On Monday a significant step up was recorded. Syria announced, for the first time and in a clear voice, that the Israeli operation in its territory was not merely a 'flight,' but an offensive operation.... The current Israeli silence is golden. We can be encouraged by what we see on the other side. The Syrians, even though they are already aware of the fact that they were attacked and admit as much, have not begun to go wild. Maybe the opposite is true. The reports about a massive call-up of reserves in Syria have gone nowhere; and the various Syrian spokesmen, after warning Israel and promising a response, note that 'Syria is intent on peace, not war.' Who knows, maybe what happened -- or didn't happen -- in Syria or elsewhere on one of the nights last week, will

prove itself to have been an act that did not hasten the advent of war but, rather, somehow increased the chances of peace. That is the way it works in the Middle East, everything is upside-down."

II. "Complicated Relations Among Ankara, Damascus, and Jerusalem"

Current affairs correspondent Yoav Stern wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (9/11): "The three-way diplomatic liaison that binds Ankara, Damascus, and Jerusalem is a very sensitive matter indeed. Last week's alleged aerial incursion by Israeli warplanes that reportedly penetrated into Syria through Turkish airspace just served to make things more complicated.... Dr. Alon Liel, the Foreign Ministry's former director general, is an expert on Turkey.

He believes that while Ankara's relationship with Israel is subject to increasing tensions, the Turks and Syrians are undergoing a gradual rapprochement. According to Liel, the Anti-Defamation League's recent announcement that it now regarded the events of 1915 -- in which an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were massacred -- as genocide perpetrated by the Turks did not help matters. For the Turks, the statement was cause for much anger and heated resentment.

Many in Israel, meanwhile, view Turkey's recent political developments with concern.... The statements by Ankara's Foreign Minister, Ali Babacan, who demanded an explanation from Israel over its alleged use of Turkish airspace to strike in Syria, demonstrated Turkey's resentment regarding the incident. Liel argues that Israel should take extra care not to damage its relationship with Turkey.... However, irrespective of the government's discontent with

Israeli actions, the Turkish army -- which does not share any aspiration of compounding Turkey's Islamic national identity -- maintains warm relations with Israel. The two armies undergo joint training. Turkey's trade relations with Israel are also in good shape. Additionally, Turkey has recently been reported mediating between Syria and Israel in an attempt to jump-start negotiations between Jerusalem and Damascus. Turkey's relationship with Syria, meanwhile, has only improved in recent years, since Syria stopped supporting the PKK.... 'Syria and Turkey have started mutual visits by senior diplomats, and have begun cooperating on security-related matters,' Liel said."

III. "Talking 'Turkish' with the Syrians"

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (9/11): "There is something ironic in Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan's protest on Monday over alleged flyover of Syrian territory last week.... Interesting words from the foreign minister of a country that just nine years ago amassed thousands of troops on its border with Syria and rattled its sabers to get Syria to end its support for the separatist Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and to cough up its leader, Abdullah Ocalan.... While some are suggesting that Turkey's tome is a manifestation of its anger at the Anti-Defamation League's decision to reverse its stand on the massacres of Armenians during World War I and refer to them as genocide, the more plausible explanation has more to do with Iran. According to this reasoning, Turkey needs to protest loudly and clearly the possible violations of its airspace now because it is thinking that at some point Israel might attack Iran's nuclear facilities. In that eventuality, Turkey does not want to be blamed for letting Israeli planes use its airspace. And therefore, it may now just be building deniability."

IV. "We Don't Need Any Advice"

Columnist Aviad Kleinberg wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (9/11): "In almost every domain Israel has no national goals.... Think about the way in which, without any plan or diplomatic sense, Israel carried out a crawling annexation of the territories. We pushed the Americans, the world, the UN, Israel's High Court of Justice. We pushed yet another acre and deported shepherd after shepherd. We succeeded very well. And now what? We are stuck with an impossible map and an almost insoluble demographic-social problem."

V. "Smoke on the Horizon"

Washington correspondent Shmuel Rosner wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (9/11): "North Korea announced several days ago that in the context of its current negotiations about nuclear disarmament, the US has agreed to remove it from the list of terror-supporting countries -- a club whose other members include Syria and Iran, Sudan and Cuba. In Iraq, which was dropped from this exclusive list at the time when Saddam Hussein's regime was dismantled, the Americans admitted their mistake when they failed in their searches for vestiges of weapons of mass destruction. But in Israel, official sources estimate that the announcement was nothing more than a foolish attempt to amend a mistake with a mistake. After the initial victory in Iraq, voices were heard here to bring down the Syrian regime as well, but the prolonged entanglement on the streets of Baghdad has limited American room for maneuver. The Syrians have taken good advantage of this for small, irritating stings, while skillfully avoiding a clear invitation to a

confrontation: by infiltrating into Iraq, arming Hizbullah, undermining Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, and supporting Palestinian terror. And the less the US desires a confrontation, the more frustrated it becomes. Now, once again, it seems that it is approaching a crossroads of decision: After all, the frustration of an American president in the face of arrogance is nothing compared to that of a president being faced by a regime that embodies a concrete danger."

JONES